

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01191 031406Z
ACTION SS-25

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P R 031007Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5559
INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1191

EXDIS

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR RH ZA US
SUBJECT: JOSHUA NKOMO - BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE SECRETARY'S
MEETING MAY 6

1. NKOMO - THE MAN. A HUGE MAN WEIGHING OVER 300 POUNDS,
NKOMO'S SOFT-SPOKENESS AND TWINKLE BELIES A FIERCE DETER-
MINATION TO EMERGE AS LEADER OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE.
THE LAST 25 OF HIS 60 YEARS HAVE BEEN SPENT IN THIS EFFORT,
TEN OF THEM IN PRISON OR DETENTION. HE WAS THE ORIGINAL
LEADER OF MOST OF THE EARLY NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS IN
RHODESIA. DURING THE PERIOD HE HAS LEARNED PATIENCE AND
PRAGMATISM AND NOT A LITTLE CUNNING IN DEALING WITH MOST OF
THE WORLD'S MAJOR POWERS, LEADERS OF AFRICAN NATIONS ANDOO
NATIONALIST
MOVEMENTS. HE IS FINANCIALLY WELL OFF;HHAS A
CAPABLE GROUP OF AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN ADVISORS, AND IS
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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 01191 031406Z

MARRIED, WITH TWO CHILDREN PRESENTLY IN SCHOOL IN THE UNITED
STATES.

2. PRESENT POSITION. IN SPITE OF THE ADVANTAGES ACCRUING
FROM HIS EARLY DOMINANCE OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND
LEADERSHIP OF THE ONLY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION IN ZIMBABWE
(ZAPU), NKOMO'S REAL BASE OF POWER REMAINS CENTERED AROUND

THE MATABELE TRIBE, WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 15 0/0 OF THZ POPULATION. OTHER LEADERS WHO ARRIVED LATER ON THE SCENE LIKE SITHOLE, MUZOREWA, AND MUGABE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF COMING FROM ONE OR THE OTHER TRIBES OF THE MAJORITY SHONA SPZAKING GROUP. ALL OF THEM AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER SERVED WITH OR UNDER NKOMO. NKOMO 'S STAR HAS HAD ITS UPS AND DOWNS. HE HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN AT LEAST 7 DIFFERENT ATTEMPTS TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT WITH THE BRITISH AND RHODESIANS. HIS EFFORTS TO WORK OUT AN AGREEMENT WITH SMITH IN 1975 LED TO A SHARP LOSS IN PRESTIGE AS HE BECAME TABBED AS A COLLABORATOR AND "UNCLE TOM." HIS IMAGE AS A MILITANT LEADER HAS BEEN REESTABLISHED MORE RECENTLY HOWEVER AS A RESULT OF HIS ALLIANCE WITH THE RADICAL ZANU LEADER, ROBERT MUGABE, AND CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE IS NOW ENGAGED IN AN EFFORT TO BUILD HIS PARTY'S ARMED STRENGTH FROM THE 500 OR SO FIGHTERS HE HAD AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TO AS MANY AS 5,000 WITH SOVIET AND FRONTLINE HELP. THE FORCE IS AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS A BALANCE TO ZANU'S LARGER MILITWRY ORGAINZATION AS IT IS A WEAPON TO BE USED AGAINST SMITH. NKOMO'S SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF ZIMBABWE IS PROBABLY STRONGER THAN INSIDE. HE HAS THE EXCULSIVE BACKING OF THE FRONTLINE STATES AND SOVIETS AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US, THE BRITISH, OTHER WESTERNERS, THOUGH THERE MAY BE SOME WAVERING BY NYERERE AND KHAMA. HE IS WELL KNOWN ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA, BUT HIS POSITION OUTSIDE THE FRONTLINE IS NOT MUCH STRONGER THAN THAT OF MUZOREWA OR SITHOLE. WHILE HE TALKS CONFIDENTLY OF HIS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT INSIDE RHODESIA, WE WOULD GUESS THAT HE RECOGNIZES HE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY WINNING A FREE ELECTION. HE IS ALSO PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE RULE OF AFRICAN POLITICS THAT "WINNER TAKES ALL." THUS HE

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PAGE 03 LUSAKA 01191 031406Z

MUST SEEK A SOLUTION IN WHICH THE OUTSIDE WORLD AGREES TO THE IMPOSITION OF HIS PARTY IN A SETTLEMENT SITUATION SIMILAR TO WHAT OCCURRED WITH FRELIMO IN MOZAMBIQUE, OR IF NECESSARY,TJ FOLLOWING

THE ANGOLA EXAMPLE.

3. MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY. LAST WEEK NKOMO SOUGHT THE MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY AS WELL AS WITH FRENCH AND BRITISH LEADERS; IN ALL THREE CASES HE WILL MEET THEM ALONE WITHOUT HIS ZANU PARTNERS. HE HAS TRIED TO KEEP THE MEETINGS QUIET, BUT IN THE EVE

YNTHAT THEY BECOME PUBLIC, HE IS CASTING THE MEETINGS IN TERMS OF THE WESTERN POWERS ASKING TO SEE HIM. IN OUR ESTIMATION HE WILL WANT TO DISCUSS THREE THINGS:

--HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS SUDDENT REPUTATION AS A RADICAL AND WANTS THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE WEST THAT HE HAS NOT SOLD OUT TO COMMUNISM BUT WOULD REMAIN A PRAGMATIC LEADER OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE. SPECIFICALLY, HE IS SEEKING ASSURANCES THAT WE WILL NOT OPPOSE HIM.

--HE WOULD LIKE HUMANITARIAN HELP FROM US. WHILE HE CAN GET
ARMS FROM THE SOVIETS, THE DETERIORATING

CONDITIONS IN
NATIONALIST CAMPS IN MOZAMBIQUE, ZAMBIA, AND ANGOLA HAS
LED HIM TO RECOGNIZE THAT IF HE CAN PRODUCE FOOD, CLOTHING,
AND EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AMONG ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISTS WHO
HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY, HIS STATURE AS A LEADER WILL BE
GREATLY ENHANCED AND THE POPULARITY OF HIS MOVEMENT STRENGTHENED.
RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THE BRITISH AND PERHAPS THE U.S. MIGHT
AGREE TO SOME HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH
UN AGENCIES HAS ENCOURAGED HIM.

--IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR WHAT POSITION HE WILL TAKE ON THE
OWEN PROPSALS. HE SHIFTS GROUND QUICKLY AND EASILY. HE IS
NOT LIKELY TO OPPOSE THE INITIATIVE OUTRIGHT, NOR IS HE LIKELY
TO OPPOSE

THE INITIATIVE OUTRIGHT, NOR IS HE LIKELY TO ACCEDE
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PAGE 04 LUSAKA 01191 031406Z

TO THE PROPOSAL AS IT WAS SUGGESTED BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY.
HE WOULD LIKE TO DELAY UNTIL HE CAN STRENGTHEN HIS OWN ORGAN-
IZATION AND BUILD OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR ITS IMPOSITION. WE BELIEVE
HE WILL DISCUSS THE PROPOSALS RATIONALLY AND REASONABLY BUT
LEAVE HIMSELF PLENTY OF ROOM FOR MANEUVERING.

4. NKOMO PROBABLY BELIEVES HE CAN REASSURE THE WEST MORE
EFFECTIVELY AND BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO SOLICIT ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR IT WITHOUT HIS PATRIOTIC FRONT PARTNERS FROM ZANU.
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